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ABSTRACT

The Reading Miscue Inventory (RMI) is a diagnostic instrument based on the assumption that reading is not letter or word decoding, but rather a process of predicting, selecting, and sampling of cues that are subsequently tested by syntactic and semantic information within both the reader and the text. In a case study of three remedial readers referred for tutoring to a college reading clinic, the findings of pre-session RMIs substantially altered the remedial programs the tutors had prepared to use with their subjects--two primary grade students and one seventh grader. Since the RMIs indicated that these readers were making good use of the sound-symbol cue system, the tutors decided to concentrate more on developing reading strategies based on semantic and syntactic information; they stressed comprehension through language experience stories, directed reading-thinking activities, wide reading of high-interest materials, retelling and paraphrasing, and lessons emphasizing the use of context. As a post-session measure the RMI, along with teacher-made informal reading inventories, showed growth even when, in one case, a standardized survey test revealed no gain over the year. (Author/RL)

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ADDING THE READING MISCUE INVENTORY TO THE READING CASE STUDY

Joan T. Feeley

The Reading Miscue Inventory (RMI) is a relatively new (Goodman and Burke, 1972) diagnostic instrument based on a psycholinguistic model of the reading process (Goodman, 1967; Smith, 1971). This model assumes that reading is not letter or word decoding but rather a process of predicting, selecting, and sampling of cues that are subsequently tested by syntactic and semantic information within both the reader and the text. Efficient readers use the least amount of available information to make the best predictions. The goal is always comprehension which is described as the reconstruction of the author's message.

The RMI, through an analysis of a reader's miscues or unexpected responses produced during a taped reading, yields a profile which reveals the strategies the reader uses as he interacts with a text. It shows strengths and weaknesses in terms of the three cue systems identified by the psycholinguists: the graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic.

To see if it might add insights, the RMI was included in the regular case study procedures used by graduate reading students in their diagnosis course at William Paterson College. The RMI was administered and interpreted by students in a graduate course in psycholinguistics and reading taught by the writer.

The traditional case study included a survey test, an informal reading inventory constructed by the students, a diagnostic test (Gates-McKillop), an IQ test (Peabody Picture Vocabulary), and other measures as indicated.

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The subjects were children of various ages who had been referred to the college by their local schools.

I had the opportunity to supervise some of the cases through their remediation term (ten to twelve sessions of one to one and a half hours) and thus observe the impact of the RMI. The following three case studies illustrate instances in which the added measure made a decided difference in the tutors' approaches, and, in one case (Isaac), provided one demonstrable measure of improvement in reading ability. Because the case study information for each child is so extensive, only the scores and activities pertinent to the purpose of this article will be discussed.

JULIE

C.A. : 6-11 M.A.: 7-3 IQ: 102 Grade 2

	Fall	Spring
Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) Instructional Level	1[1]	2[2]
California Reading Test (Low Primary)		
Vocabulary	2.1	3.6
Comprehension	1.8	4.0
Total Reading	2.0	3.7

Reading Miscue Inventory

	Grade Level of Material	Comprehension Pattern Percent of Miscues Causing No Loss	Partial Loss	Loss	Retelling Score	Use of Reading Strategies
Fall	1	68	22	9	39	Moderately Effective
Spring	2	62	31	8	68	Highly Effective

Summary of Diagnosis

Julie exhibited slow, halting, unnatural oral reading. While the Gates-McKillop indicated a low oral reading score, scores on knowledge of phonics and word parts were all very high. Comprehension scores on the IRI and survey test were low.

The RMI confirmed that Julie used sound/symbol relationships very well but also showed that she was not using the syntactic and semantic cue systems effectively. Relying heavily on letter-by-letter phonics and frequently disregarding end punctuation, she was a word-bound reader who was having difficulty predicting the author's structures. Her low retelling score (39 out of a possible 100) and high comprehension pattern of her miscues (68 percent causing no loss in meaning) on the fall RMI indicated that her concentration had been on performance for others (getting the words right) rather than on gaining meaning for self.

Remedial Program

Concentration was placed on silent reading for meaning. Directed Reading-Thinking Activities (DRTA) in easy basals were planned for each session, first at the 1^1 level, then gradually increasing in difficulty. Attention was given to predicting outcomes, character traits, and motives. Inferential and evaluative thinking were encouraged.

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) was employed to show that print carries a message. One story about a visit to a pumpkin farm was later used as a cloze procedure in which the reader had to predict blanks from context. Guessing games, incomplete sentences, and riddles were also used to encourage using the context.

At the beginning, silent reading was used exclusively. Later, attention was given to phrasing in oral reading through teacher modeling and listening to her own taped reading of easy selections. She was encouraged to"make reading sound like language." Punctuation as an aid to thought-getting and intonation was worked on through punctuating and reading aloud her own LEA stories.

Each week Julie was presented with a choice of easy reading trade books to read between sessions.

Discussion

Julie was a particularly good subject for remediation since she was interested and willing and had a cooperative parent who brought her faithfully.

The regular diagnosis instruments indicated a need for work in oral reading and comprehension and showed her strength in phonics. Supporting Julie's good use of sound/symbol, sometimes to the exclusion of the sematic and syntactic cue systems, the RMI suggested that Julie was reading to perform rather than to understand. Hence, the strategies emphasized silent reading, using the context, and composing stories to relate print to meaning. Oral reading was eventually worked on through student-tutor discussion of taped readings.

Julie's spring survey test showed 1.7 years gain. Of course, the remedial sessions can't be given all the credit since Julie was receiving reading instruction in school during the same period. But, the trend is clear -- Julie was reading more effectively; the IRI showed that her

instructional level was now 2^2 or on grade. The spring RMI confirmed this since she read an average second grade selection making Highly Effective Use of reading strategies. Notable was the high retelling score of 68 as compared with the fall score of 39.

Julie was reading for meaning now. Even her oral reading sounded better, relatively free from all hesitations, long pauses to sound out words, and word-by-word reading. The most casual listener would be impressed with the difference between the fall and spring tapes. In school Julie was handling on-grade level materials, and an earlier recommendation for summer tutoring in reading was withdrawn. Instead, she and her mother were investigating the summer reading program in their local library because Julie had become used to the trade books her tutor had been supplying, and she wanted to continue her "Book Worm" chart on her own.

The use of the RMI in this case not only confirmed the findings of some of the more commonly used diagnostic instruments, but also pinpointed the need for developing the use of syntactic and semantic cues found in running text. It also offered reasons for Julie's poor oral reading and suggested working on meaning before giving attention to oral performance. Julie was too engrossed in reading the words (which she did laboriously but very well) to get the underlying message of the passage. The lessons on using the context, predicting and confirming, phrasing, and using punctuation markers helped her "to put it all together" and become a competent reader for her age and grade level.

ISAAC

C.A.: 12-8 M.A.: 10-1 IQ: 81 Grade: 7

	Fall	Spring
Informal Reading Inventory Instructional Level	4	6
Gates-MacGinitie Survey E		
Vocabulary	5.3	5.6
Comprehension	5.3	3.9

Reading Miscue Inventory

	Grade Level of Material	Comprehension Pattern Percent of Miscues Causing No Loss	Partial Loss	Loss	Retelling Score	Use of Reading Strategies
Fall	5	60	20	20	60	Moderately-to-Highly Effective
Spring	6	64	16	20	88	Highly Effective

Summary of Diagnosis

Because of a low oral reading score on the Gates McKillop (4.0) and the IRI composite instructional level of grade four, Isaac's tutor at first decided he needed "intensive oral and silent reading practice" beginning with fourth-grade level materials. Noting a dropping of endings in the oral reading portions of the IRI and a low score on the "final letters" sub-test of the Gates-McKillop, she planned to "work on word endings." Without saying why, she also indicated that he needed work on vowel sounds and syllabication.

The fall RMI profile identified Isaac as a black dialect speaker (48 percent of his first 25 miscues were dialect-related), explaining his

"dropping of endings" as dialect production rather than lack of knowledge about final letters. It showed he made good use of sound (84 percent of his miscues had high sound similarity to expected responses), graphic (90 percent of his miscues had high or some similarity to expected responses), and grammar cues (95 percent of his miscues had the same grammatical function as the expected responses). Since 68 percent of his miscues indicated strength in using grammatical relationships, it may be said that he made good use of both the grammatical and semantic cue systems.

His comprehension pattern shown above indicated that he was making Moderately-to-Highly Effective Use of reading strategies when reading material at approximately fifth-grade level since 60 percent of his miscues caused no loss in comprehension and his retelling score was 60.

Remedial Program

With the above information added to her diagnosis, Isaac's tutor changed her original plans and decided to concentrate on silent reading for meaning with materials of high interest to him. Instead of starting with level four, she began her DRTAs with grade five selections, moving on to grade six materials after trying them out with a cloze procedure to check on suitability. Isaac's cloze score was 58 percent, indicating that he could easily read this text.

As a follow-up activity, the teacher went over his cloze responses with him, pointing out when his entries were syntactically and semantically acceptable. This proved to be a very salutory experience since Isaac was learning formal grammar in school, and this clarified many concepts for him. "So that's what an adjective is," he remarked at one point.

Each week Isaac wrote an entry in a diary, talking it over with his teacher first. Through these sessions, the teacher was able to work on narrowing a topic, writing to capture interest, and, of course, spelling and mechanics. She was surprised to note that Isaac wrote all those endings that he had left out in oral reading and speaking, confirming the RMI findings about dialect oral production.

The following books, chosen by Isaac from a group supplied by his tutor, were read at home; discussions during the sessions indicated good comprehension.

Latham, J.L. Sam Houston. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1965.
Lawson, Robert. Mr. Revere and I. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968.
Titus, Eve. Basil of Baker Street. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970.

Discussion

The RMI information caused this tutor to change her first diagnosis and program completely. She abandoned the isolated word attack skills and oral reading plan for a comprehension-centered one that made use of contextual materials written at higher levels of difficulty than she had first thought Isaac could handle.

If she were to go by the survey tests administered at the beginning and end of the school year, she would have concluded that Isaac had actually lost ground in reading ability, especially in comprehension (fall 5.3; Spring 3.9). Isaac may be one of those children who do not perform well on paper and pencil tests. His tutor noticed that he finished quickly, especially the spring testing, obviously not reading every item and choosing randomly as the items became more difficult.

Despite the Gates-MacGinitie scores, his tutor knew he was reading better. His instructional level on the composite IRI was now grade six, two years higher than in the fall. According to the spring RMI, Isaac was making Highly Effective Use of reading strategies when reading sixth grade material. Particularly important was his retelling score of 88. This time he recalled a great many details and was able to succinctly give the plot and theme of the story.

These two performance indicators supported the tutor's and Isaac's own perceptions of his more effective reading strategies. A student in an academically competitive private school, he ended up the school year with passing grades in the content areas in which he had been doing poorly. Competency must be inferred from more than one performance measure. In this case the composite IRI and taped RMI told the story.

CRAIG

C.A.: 7-10 M.A.: 10-5 IQ: 123 Grade: 2

	Fall	Spring
Informal Reading Inventory		
Instructional Level	2^{1}	3^{2}
Capacity Level	3^{2}	4^{1}
Gates-MacGinitie Primary B		
Vocabulary	2.5	3.6
Comprehension	2.2	4.0

Reading Miscue Inventory

	Grade Level of Material	Comprehension Pattern Percent of Miscues Causing No Loss	Partial Loss	Loss	Retelling Score	Use of Reading Strategies
Fall	2	24	16	60	27	Some Effective Use
Spring	2	62	25	13	83	Highly Effective

Reading Miscue Inventory

	Use of Grammatical Relationships: Percent of Miscues Indicating			
	Strength	Partial Strength	Weakness	Overcorrection
Fall	28	4	56	12
Spring	55	0	25	20

Summary of Diagnosis and Remedial Program

From the beginning, Craig's tutor recognized that he was a bright boy (IQ 123, IRI Capacity 3^2, Gates-McKillop Oral Vocabulary 3.3) who was not reading up to his potential. Exhibiting a rich background of experience (his father was a network TV producer and the family had traveled extensively), Craig knew he should be able to read better. This realization made him tense about reading; he shied away from it, showing obvious dislike. Phonics was not a problem; he showed normal progress or better on all knowledge of word parts and phonics subtests of the Gates-McKillop.

The fall RMI confirmed Craig's strengths in using sound/symbol relationships. He made several non-word substitutions that resembled the expected responses on the surface level (dunkin for donkey; seel for sell; welk for walk; car re'for carry). The 56 percent weakness in using grammatical relationships, coupled with 76 percent high or some graphic similarity miscues, showed that Craig was using the graphic/sound system to the exclusion of the grammatical and meaning cue systems. Unlike Julie who stayed with sounding until she came up with a word, Craig was content with surface-level approximations that made no sense at all.

The RMI strategy lessons for a reader like this called for having him apply oral language knowledge to reading, anticipate grammatical structure and meaning, and develop a feeling of confidence in his ability to guess and predict. His tutor constructed special lessons focusing on the use

of context (sentence parts matching, maze and cloze techniques) and on predicting the author's message. For instance, she introduced B. Brenner's delightful picture book, Mr. Tall and Mr. Small(New York: Young Scott Books, 1966), allowing Craig to skim through it first, noting the illustrations. Then she would read aloud, encouraging him to complete line endings (the lines rhyme and are very predictable).

The comprehension pattern of the fall MMI suggested that Craig was making only Some Effective Use of reading strategies since his miscues caused a loss in meaning 60 percent of the time, and his retelling score was only 27 out of a possible 100. Strategies for readers like this call for (1) reading in natural language contexts and (2) making judgments while reading. To implement the former, his tutor had Craig dictate a story about a recent experience each week. These were written in a notebook called "Craig's Stories." She also selected easy published materials (1^2 and 2^1 levels) for DRTAs, emphasizing previewing, predicting, and reading to confirm. These developed the latter strategy (making judgments while reading).

To interest Craig in reading and to build his confidence, the tutor supplied a choice of easy trade books each week. He would select one, read it at home, and then retell, reading parts orally, at the next session. He was very proud of his "Charlie, the Bookworm" which recorded the following books:

Bond, Gladys B. Boy in the Middle. A Magic Circle Book, Ginn and Co.,1961.
Bonsall, C.N. Tell Me Some More. Harper and Row, 1961.
Bonsall, C.N. Dumb Bells. Harper and Row, 1962
Bonsall, C.N. The Case of the Hungry Stranger. Harper and Row, 1963.
Bonsall, C.N. The Case of the Cat's Meow. Harper and Row, 1965.

Hickox, Nancy. Tuloose the Terrible Moose. A Magic Circle Book, Ginn and Co., 1973.
Kullberg, Mary E. Bill's Great Trick. Houghton Mifflin, 1968.
McPhail, D. The Glerp. A Magic Circle Book, Ginn and Co., 1972.
Sendak, M. Where the Wild Things Are. Harper and Row, 1963.
Wesley, D. Flip. Scholastic Book Service, 1962.

Discussion

In this reading-to-make-sense program, Craig showed deomonstrable growth in all performance indicators, gaining 1.8 years on the Gates-MacGinitie Comprehension Test and 1.5 years in instructional level according to the IRI composite score. His spring RMI pattern had changed impressively: 62 percent of his miscues resulted in No Loss in meaning, complementing his high retelling score of 83. He now showed Strength in using grammatical relationships (55 percent of his miscues); his Overcorrection percentage of 20 showed that he was still extra-careful, often correcting when it was not necessary. Like Julie's case, the difference between the fall and spring taped readings was remarkable.

His attitude toward reading had changed, too. From a boy who disliked reading and talking in general during the diagnosis sessions, Craig became a positive partner in his own success story. He willingly read the trade books at home and requested a reading list for the following summer. His mother and school principal reported that his interest and achievement in school had improved noticeably. Both his tutor and the school personnel agreed that there was no longer any need for remedial work; only continued practice in easy, high-interest leisure reading seemed indicated. And this was a prescription Craig was more than willing to follow.

CONCLUSIONS

In these three case studies the RMI was a positive addition. The fall

and spring profiles and tapes provided telling indicators of growth. The tutors gained new insights into their subjects' processing strategies.

Generally, the tutors ~~involved~~ concentrated more on the semantic and syntactic components, stressing comprehension through directed reading-thinking activities, language experience stories, wide reading of high interest materials, retelling and paraphrasing, and lessons emphasizing the use of context. In effect, they were concerned with developing reading strategies in full context situations rather than teaching isolated skills. This teaching of reading strategies, identified by Goodman and Burke (1972), was recently suggested by the work of Olshavsky (1977) who found that good readers used strategies more frequently than did poor readers. She concluded:

> . . . It is possible that knowing strategies and being able to use them is an important aspect of being a good reader. If strategies are found to be essential to comprehend written material, it will be necessary to find the best ways to teach readers to apply them.
>
> . . . If the reading profession accepts reading as a problem solving process, there are many implications for teaching problem identification and problem solving strategies which deal with the total reading environment rather than teaching hierarchies of reading subskills. (p. 673)

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